

Oral Focus Board 2006-2007 Annual Report  
 Submitted by Byron Gangnes  
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This year's Oral Focus Board consisted of Byron Gangnes (Chair), Amy Hubbard, Tamara Albertini, Joan Dodgson, and Randy Hensley. Richard Bigus served as our liaison to the GEC and Barbara Mueller-Ali as recorder.

The Board met on six occasions during the course of the academic year and hosted two workshop events. Much of the review and approval process for O Focus proposals was conducted via WebCT and email correspondence.

1. Policies and Hallmarks

a. Policy decisions and rationale

There were no significant policy changes made by the Board this year.

The Board discussed whether a syllabus should be required each semester for already-approved courses, and whether a clear statement on the syllabus's first page should be required indicating the O Focus and the purpose of oral communication in the course. Board members felt that this would help to ensure both continuing faculty awareness of the hallmarks and appropriate student expectations. The Board agreed that instructors should be encouraged, not required, to do so, and suggested that the F07 board should draft language that instructors could use. The GEO will be asked to include this request in the approval email that is sent to instructors.

There was also some discussion of whether a syllabus should be required of proposals. Members expressed concern that requiring a syllabus might deter instructors from requesting O. Collecting syllabi for new approved courses in the semester when they are taught was considered, but this would add to workload without a clear use since instructors would not be asked to make changes. The Board decided to request a syllabus if available for all new proposals (see 2d, below).

The Board affirmed that catalogue language for courses receiving designations should reflect the O Focus nature of the course, and suggested language was provided in one case.

Effective Spring 2007, the Board was given sole responsibility to approve Focus designations when the instructor requests 1 or 2 Focus areas. The Board continues to recommend designations to the GEC when a) the instructor requests 3 or 4 Focus areas, or b) the department requests a course-based Focus designation.

b. Hallmark revisions and rationale

No changes to the Hallmarks were made this year.

- c. Information for future Boards regarding how hallmarks were interpreted and applied and problems with interpreting hallmarks

Proposals for O designation for language courses continue to be among the most challenging. Some progress appears to have been made in communicating to language course instructors the need for the proposals to identify oral communication activities that go beyond language acquisition per se, as well as appropriate training and evaluation. Several Board members have individually developed standard email text that they use to request additional information from language instructors. The board agreed that it would be useful to develop a frequently asked questions (FAQs) web page with suggestions and examples specifically for faculty who teach language classes. Some work was begun on such a document, and the Board agrees that it would be useful to continue this work in Fall 2007.

## 2. Proposal Review

- a. Proposals were approved, denied, and withdrawn from consideration:

	S07	SS07	F07	TOTAL
Approved	38	9	19	66
Pending	0	0	0	0
Denied	2	0	0	2
Withdrawn	0	1	1	2
TOTAL	40	10	20	70

Note: Includes both "staff" proposals and proposals subsequently submitted by the assigned instructor, if reviewed in the same semester.

- b. Twenty-five instructors were contacted because their proposals did not readily meet the oral Focus standards. Twenty-two were revised by the instructor and subsequently approved; two were withdrawn; one was denied because there was no response from the instructor.
- c. Changes in procedures

Much of the proposal review took place within WebCT, which increased convenience for Board members and ease of communication among the Board.

- d. Changes to the proposal form

The Board agreed on the following modifications to the form for New O designations:

- Add to question 2: List the activities, strategies, and devices you plan to teach your students to become better oral communicators. (This change was added to try to get more responsive answers to the training question.)

- Add a new #5: If you have a draft syllabus available, please include it. (This addition was made to elicit more detailed information when it is available.)

GEO asked whether the Board wanted to consider using a chart modeled after the one used by the W Board. The Board favored this option and intends to discuss it further in F07.

### 3. Current status of offerings

	Number of Oral Communication Classes Offered	Number of Seats Available	Number of Seats Filled	Average Enrollment	Median Enrollment
Spr 2007	131	2456	1962 (80%)	15	16
Fall 2006	85	1468	1284 (87%)	15	16

Oral Communication Focus classes were offered in these subject areas in 2006-2007:

ACC	DNCE	HAW	MEDT	SOC
ACM	EDEA	HON	NREM	SP
APDM	EE	ILO	OCN	SPA
ART	ES	IS	PACE	SPAN
BIOC	FIL	ITE	PHYS	THEA
BOT	FR	JPN	POLS	WS
BUS	FSHN	KLS	PSY	
CEE	GER	LING	REL	

### 4. Faculty development efforts. The O Board organized and hosted two workshops for faculty interested in teaching O Focus courses.

a) *Modifying Your Course for the Oral Communication Hallmarks: A Syllabus Editing Workshop*. 11/15/06. The workshop was intended to focus on how instructors can modify their existing course syllabi to meet O hallmarks. Instructors were encouraged to bring their syllabi to the workshop for one-on-one help, with computers available for hands-on editing. Sang-Hyop Lee, Economics, served as a resource person along with Board members. Four faculty from ACM, PACE, ART, and HIST attended.

Attendance was low, probably due to the date at a busy period in the semester and late announcement. More time than planned was spent reviewing proposal requirements; less on actually reviewing syllabi. Examples of exemplary responses to O Focus form questions were distributed.

b) *Lessons Learned from First Timers*. 3/14/07. 3 faculty presenters—Tamara Albertini (PHIL), David Haymer (BIOL), Krisna Suryanata (GEOG)—talked about their experience as first-time O Focus instructors. Attendance was excellent with 11 participants from ACM, HWST, MBBE, EALL, SLS, PACE, ES, WS and ITM. The very specific comments and examples of the panel were very well-received. Copies of *A Pocket Guide to Public Speaking* and its *Instructor's Resource Manual* were distributed to participants.

The Board continued a discussion begun by Tom Hilgers in 2005-2006 about the need to recruit O Focus instructors from underrepresented areas. Efforts were made to attract faculty from a number of underrepresented departments for the fall workshop. This is an area that deserves additional attention in the future.

5. Assessment

a. End-of-semester survey

The Board continued to invite instructors of all O Focus courses to conduct an end-of-semester student survey provided by the GEO. We inform instructors that they will be required to have at least one set of survey responses on record when they come up for renewal.

b. Hallmarks: assessment of how effective the Hallmarks are in designating courses that meet the spirit of the Foundations or Focus area

Monica Stitt-Bergh (GEO) participated in our meetings in order to gather information for drafting learning outcomes for assessment purposes. The VCAA and GEC have committed UHM to developing learning outcomes by the end of April.

6. Current concerns and issues

As noted last year, a continuing concern of the Board is that most proposals for renewals are inadequate and the Board must go back for more information. A particular concern is the question regarding training to be provided to students, which only rarely elicits an informative response. The Board agreed in April 2007 on a modification to the Oral Focus Proposal form intended to clarify the training question. It will be important to monitor responses over the next year to see whether the new language is more effective.

7. Future priorities and goals

Clearly a continuing priority must be recruitment of O Focus instructors from underrepresented areas. The Board was not able to spend much time on this issue this year, but it deserves additional attention in the future.

Other recommended agenda items for Fall 07 include:

- a. Draft O-statement language for instructors to use on the first page of their syllabus.
- b. Discuss using a chart modeled after the one used by the W Board for O-designation requests.
- c. Work with GEO to post exemplary proposals at the Gen Ed web site.

- d. Explore possibilities of distributing a book to workshop participants as was done at 3/14 workshop.
- e. Finalize draft FAQs for language instructors.